A SERMON OF *CATECHIZING*;

THOUGHT FIT

For affinity of ſubject to be annexed to this Treatiſe of the [Practicall uſe of

INFANT-BAPTISME.]

By the ſame Authour.

Lutherus ſe profeſſus eſt *Diſcipulum Catechiſmi.*

Οὐκ ἔστι πιστεῦται ἀνὲυ κατηχήσεως.

Ἡ ἐν γὰρ κατήχησις πίστιν ἐπιφέρει. *Clem. Alex. Pædag.*

Νεκρὸν ἰατρεύειν, καὶ γέροντα ἰσθητεῖν τοῦτο ἔστι.

LONDON,

Printed for *John Rothwel.* 1655.

TO THE READER.

Christian Reader,

Thou art here presented with a Sermon tending to revive an Ordinance of God, *almost grown out of date, what through the neglect of* parents *in private, and* Ministers *and* Magistrates *in publick; and that in some places so far, that it is the great hinderance of those that* doe *practise it, to be prejudiced by the example of those that* doe not; *some children being apt to plead the liberty that others have, and count it an injury if they enjoy not the same: though it be the* sad *liberty of* dying without instruction. *And this neglect is so much the more sad, because it is so visible a* compliance *with the* erroneous

ous *and* heretical generation *of this present Age, who first deeryed it in these dayes of sinful liberty; as knowing how far such an omission would befriend them. Thence thousands of people, seasoned with* no *principles, become easily infected with* theirs. *Multitudes of Apostates, concerning whom all the good we can say, is, that they* speak
2 Pet. 2. 2 evil of the things they know not, and turn away from the holy Commandement, *without the sad aggravation of* having known the way of righteousnes. *However it is a grievous thing that multitudes should daily (through ignorance and errour) go blindfold to Hell, and few men take any pains to lend them their helping hand to keep them from that sad doom of* perishing for want of knowledge. *If it be said,* This is done by constant Preaching; *I answer, surely a man may Preach long enough to hundreds in the Congregation (if his Congregation be of any largeness extraordinary) who will not be able to give any accompt of one sentence they hear, if they live an hundred years under the Ordinance: which will not appear improbable, if we consider, that* many *come to Church meerly for* fashion, *and take no notice of any thing there, but* gaze *upon this*

this, and that object; *that* others *are dull of apprehenſion, and their underſtandings, in a continued diſcourſe, are like a troubled water, wherein one ring or circle drives out another; and laſtly, that* all generally, *except they be catechized, or extraordinarily furniſhed with parts beyond their neighbors, find it an hard matter to underſtand the very common terms, in which Preachers muſt expreſſe themſelves, and many times loſe a whole Sermon for want of underſtanding, or miſ-underſtanding of them; For though a Miniſter thinks he expreſſeth himſelf very plain, yet it is almoſt incredible what ſtrange conceits moſt ignorant people have of common notions. We that are Miniſters of the Goſpel may eaſily gueſſe at the profoundneſſe of their ignorance, by our own groſſe imaginations (worſe then* Nicodemus *his of* Regeneration) *when we were children, although we had the advantage of education beyond them; what* abſurd apprehenſions *we had concerning the greateſt and weightieſt points of Religion. And I am ſure moſt of our hearers are not arrived (nor ever do to their dying day arrive) unto the underſtanding of a child of twelve or fourteen years old, bred under means of* Literature. *Many of our* words, *and* expreſſions

ſions *in our Sermons (do what we can) are* Metaphorical *and* Equivocal; *or, if* proper, *yet (according to the preſent* improvement of the Engliſh Tongue, *which a Miniſter that hath been bred a Scholar cannot poſſibly but have ſome ſmatch of) we have many* forreign *words, made* denizons *of our language, which being grown familiar to us, we are apt to uſe, and with a general charity to all our peoples underſtandings, conceive they ſtumble them no more then they doe us, whiles yet we are* to them Barbarians *(do what we can many times) even in our own* Mother Tongue. *In a word, conſider that no Miniſter in his Preaching, let him be never ſo full, and plain, and methodical, can poſſibly, caſt all the heads of Divinity,* the form of ſound words, *into ſo narrow a compaſſe (conſidering the time that he muſt take up in (the principal part of Preaching)* Application; *but that to go through them in that way, will require a competent number of years, for a man that is but indifferently full of matter, though he forbear all unneceſſary enlargements. And (in this way) before an hearer can be throughly acquainted with a* ſyſteme of Divinity, *to know what he* ſhould doe, *the greateſt part of his* doing time

time *will be over. Besides, to such a way of principling men, by the tedious method before spoken of, we must suppose each hearer to be able to accompany a Preacher with an* understanding *and* memory, *sutable to his daily progresse from* point *to* point, *and to be every Lords day present; otherwise what he loseth, (either through absence or weaknesse of apprehension and memory) at one time, will make such a wide gap and breach in the rest of notions, that he is rendred uncapable of understanding, and improving many* other *points, to which the knowledge of* that *or* those *wherein he so fails, necessarily leads. I might adde here the usuall confinement of many practicall Preachers, by the inclination of their* own spirits, *or the secret determination of* Gods Spirit, *to such a* series *of Truths, as tends most to some end which they are most fitted to pursue; the main stream of* one *Ministers labours running in the channel of* convincing *Truths.* Anothers *labours are most directed to work upon the hearts of sinners for* conversion; anothers *to apply cordials to the hearts of Saints for* consolation; another *studies, and Preacheth for the most part in a Theological determination of* Cases *of* Conscience, *and most of*

of the ſtrength of their labours, is ſpent in thoſe reſpective wayes, to which their ſtudies moſt bend. Now, how ſhall an hearer from ſuch a mans Preaching, if he wait only on his Miniſtery, be rendred (as he ſhould be) throughly furniſhed for every good work? *Theſe things I have (in brief) preſented to ſuch of my* reverend Fathers and Brethren, *as (among other Readers) ſhall think any thing of mine worthy their condeſcenſion to look upon it; concerning* hundreds *of whom in this Land, I ingenuouſly and from my heart acknowledge, that I am not worthy to* carry their Books after them; *and therefore confeſſe my ſelf too weak to adviſe them. Only, for the glory of God, and the ſalvation of poor ſouls, and (in the preſent courſe which they are to run in this erroneous and ſeducing generation) for their grounding, and ſettling upon neceſſary foundations of faith and godlineſſe; I think my ſelf bound to be a remembrancer unto ſuch of* our Miniſtery, *as have too much (of late) neglected this Ordinance of God; and eſpecially to thoſe who are of the judgement of* Infant-Baptiſme, *who cannot but know that the very admiſſion of* Infants *as* Church-members *by* Baptiſme, *renders the whole* Church, *and themſelves principally*

principally (as Officers *thereof) indebted to them for their education.* Men, Fathers, *and* Brethren, *I beseech you bear with a few affectionate expostulations with you, on the behalf of the most* innocent, *most* hopeful, *most* teachable *part of your Congregations, those I mean, of the* yonger sort. *It may be they are yet, (for the most part)* dis-engaged *in their affections: Did they understand grace, and Christ, and Religion, these might* prepossesse *them, and gain their* first love. *You may preach out your lungs and heart to them, when they are set upon their sinful way, and* marching furiously *in it like so many* Jehu's, *or* settled upon their lees. *When their lusts have gotten the protection of a rivetted ignorance, and it may be possessed them with a desire of continuing in it.*

Surely (me thinks) you should leave your young candidates of holinesse, *whom you have washed in* Baptismall water, *pleading with you thus:*

Sirs, by your Ministery, we are devoted to the service of one God, in a glorious Trinity of persons. How shall we serve him whom we know not? Think you, we can ever own it for a mercy, or a priviledge, to be admitted into a Covenant,

venant, which we understand not? And will it not be the greatest temptation to us, to renounce that Ordinance, because we cannot tell what good it doth to us? Our present Age, renders us waxy and ductile, easily moulded into any form. Why do you not forestall the market of Satan and Seducers, by prepossessing us for God? Why are we dedicated to God in our Infant-age, if not to engage us to be his betime? And how can we be so, except we give our selves a sacrifice voluntarily, as once we were offered by our parents: And how can we offer our selves a sacrifice, but in a reasonable service, *Rom.* 12.1? Did you then only admit us to the empty name of Christians, and Church-members, that we might afterwards (for want of knowledge, of our duty) live and dye the veryer Heathens? You preach truth, and we hear it, but our bottles are too narrow mouth'd, to take in so much at once; nay, so great a stream striving for admission at once, causeth all to run beside. You preach to work upon our Consciences, but work upon our understandings first, and deal with us according

cording to our capacities. Give us milk as babes, and that will ſtrengthen our ſtomachs to digeſt ſtronger meat in time. Our parents, (many of them, moſt of them) are ignorant, or careleſs of the performance of ſo neceſſary a duty. We are therefore devolved upon you, as our ſpiritual Fathers. Let it not ſeem much to you to deſcend beneath your ſelves, & the heights of your learned Nations & high ſpeculations, to liſp principles a little with your babes in Chriſt: The great Apoſtle did ſo, and was never the leſſe for it. And it will be no whit to your diſcomfort at the laſt day, that you have denyed your greateſt excellency, which makes you taller by the head and ſhoulders then other men, for the glory of Chriſt, and the ſalvation of ſouls, by becoming all things to all perſons, and ages, that you might win ſome.

Dear and honoured Sirs, *what ſhall any of us reply to ſo rational a plea? Yea, how much ſhall we come ſhort of our duty, if we do not grant it, and act accordingly? If we be* Shepherds, *like* Chriſt the great Shepherd, *we muſt* carry the Lambs in our boſome, *as well as* drive *the* elder ſheep before us. *If we be Fathers indeed,*

we must teach our children to goe by the formes, *and* walls, *and* goe-cart, *who cannot goe alone, till they gather skill and strength enough to doe so. For my part, I had not made so bold with you, but upon a principle (I hope) of* self-denial, *chusing rather to adventure the censure of my reverend* Fathers *and* elder brethren, *then to suffer the soules of so many of my* younger brethren and sisters *in the Lord, as are daily born into the Church by Baptisme, to be starved at nurse for want of milk. As for the means of redressing these sad mischiefs, I know none like the conscionable practise of Catechizing, fortified with the* Magistrates *concurrence, to command both the Ministry to do their duty therein, and all Parents and Masters to present their children and servants under some severe penalty thereunto. For truly the* Ministers *are not altogether to blame in this thing. Many of them would do more in it, could they prevail with their people to put to their helping hands: but this is many times the lot of industrious Ministers, they would Catechize willingly, but that they can prevail with very few to be willing to be Catechized.* Is there no balm in Gilead? *no power in the Magistrates hand to heal this evil disease of spiritual*

sloth

ſloth and careleſneſſe of attending upon publick Ordinances? Honourable Patriots! *we deſire not you ſhould force the conſciences of any to conſent to what it ſees not ground for from the Scriptures; but we deſire, you ſhould bring them where they may be informed, and then let God work. We would teach them their duty to* you, *together with their duty to* God, *as well, and (I hope better then thoſe* private *Teachers, whom they have yet (by a* publick allowance*) liberty to follow; we act in the face of the Sun, we infuſe no principles in corners, but what we preach publickly; you know our doctrine and our converſation. Do the* levelling Anti-Magiſtratical *doctrines that fly all abroad about the Land flow from* our *Congregations or* theirs? *Is it not ſafer to have children principled by* us *in a* publick way, *by* Catechiſmes appointed by Authority, *then by* others *in* private, *who (ſome of them) teach either the* Raccovian, *or the* Munſterian *principles, or (which are worſe then both) the horrid* Gallimaufrey *of Errours and Hereſies, raked up out of all the kennels and dunghils of the former and preſent Ages, lately penned, and Printed by* John Bidle. *For my part, I think* publick Catechizing, *yields the greateſt ſecu-*

rity to the Magistrate that can be, of his subjects, *especially the very prime, and cream of them, the* youth; *who if they be poisoned by such principles as dare not abide the light, may create unknown dangers to him, when he thinks himself most secure. And I think, that was the Politique ground of that project (some years since) of taking the children of* Papists *out of their hands, and giving them* Protestant *education.*

The Lord in his time convince us all of our duty, and quicken us to it: that we may by laying the sound grounds *of Religion in the youth of these Nations, provide for the maintenance of Truth and Holinesse in succeeding generations. Mean while I have done my endeavour to the furtherance of this work, and (I hope) removed all rational impediments thereunto, in the following Sermon; which I leave in thy hands,* Christian Reader, *wishing it may work upon thee whoever thou art in thy capacity, to yield a ready assistance to the furtherance of so eminently useful an Ordinance.* Vale & fruere.

From my study at *Reading, Octob.* 25. 1654.

Thy affectionate friend, and servant in the Gospel,

SIMON FORD.

A SERMON OF *CATECHIZING.*

PROV. 22. v. 6.

Train up [or Catechize] *a child in the way he ſhould goe; and when he is old he* will not *depart from it.*

THe Ordinance of *Catechizing* or grounding children in the *principles* of Chriſtian Religion, hath been ſo conſtant a cuſtome in all Ages and Churches, that none ever profeſſedly ſet himſelf againſt it, but thoſe that made it their buſineſs to promote *ignorance*, and (by means thereof) to propagate *Atheiſm*, or *Hereſie*. And as for ſuch perſons, we need not wonder, that they

engage themselves so hotly against it, if wee consider, how great a means it is, both by way of *Antidote*, to prevent, and by way of *medicine*, to cure those *Ægyptian botches*, whereever it is used as it ought to be. As for *Atheisme*; it is either *notional*, or *practical*. It is doubted among learned men, whether ever there were any of the *former* sort of Atheists in the world. But if ever there were any, whose heart in earnest told him, there is no God, I dare confidently affirm, his tender years were not seasoned with the contrary truths, the knowledge of the nature, attributes, and service of him. And for *practical* Atheism, 'tis next to impossible, that without grievous *reluctancies* of conscience, and mighty *struglings* of a convinced judgement, any man should with an high hand continue in such Atheistical courses as proclaim to the world that the fear of God is not before his eyes, who hath from his infancy been instructed in the principles of faith and godlinesse. And lastly, the present spreading of damnable *hereses*, (being a disease that runs mostly among ignorant and unprincipled persons) plainly evinceth that the cure of that *gangrene* must be by the contrary, that is, grounding them in the knowledge of the principles of Religion; that being the most proper Antidote against that infection which spreads most in dark corners, to follow it with the discovering light of foundation-truths. No wonder then if when Satan endeavours (upon such designes) to beat down this *Ordinance*, the faithful Ministers of Christ in all Ages, have perpetually made use of it as their strongest bulwark

wark againſt his batteries; and laboured to ſecure the truths of God by an holy prepoſſeſſion of the hearts of young ones. With the ſacred *Magazine* of *Fundamental Principles*, from whence, upon all aſſaults, they may be able to fetch a *ſcriptum eſt*, for offence and defence, as becomes diſciplined and *trained ſouldiers* of Jeſus Chriſt. Thence in the *Primitive* times (as all Hiſtories of that time inform us) there were *two Regiments* of theſe trained ſouldiers in the Church, who were all called κατηχούμενοι, the *Catechiſed*.

1. *Some of age*, who being converted from *Iudaiſme* or *Gentiliſme*, to Chriſtianity, were before Baptiſme throughly tried in their knowledge of that Religion which they undertook to profeſſe, leſt they ſhould eaſily afterwards be drawn to apoſtatize from that God whom they *ignorantly worſhipped*. Thence it is the judgement of able Divines, that the account that was taken of theſe perſons, was called διδαχὴ βαπτισμῶν, Heb. 6.2. *the doctrine of Baptiſmes*, which contained ſuch heads of Chriſts Religion, as were neceſſary to be known by perſons of Age in order to Baptiſme, eſpecially of the nature of Sacraments, &c. *Urſinus Catech: Kuchſinus*

2. *Some little children*, who being born of Chriſtian parents, were firſt admitted to *Baptiſme*, & as they grew in years, catechized in order to the receiving of the *Lords Supper*; to which they were not admitted whiles they were *Catechumeni*, *i. e.* till they were (upon giving an account of their knowledge) as it were diſcharged from that ſervice by the *laying on of*

hands. And therfore the ſame Divines (before noted) conceive that διδαχὴ ἐπιθέσεως χειρῶν, *the doctrine of laying on of hands, Heb.* 6. 1, 2. denotes the Catechiſme wherein they were examined, who by that ceremony were admitted to that higheſt part of Church-fellowſhip, the communion of the *Lords Supper.*

Now theſe two Regiments were ſo cloſely followed by their Catechiſts, that as in divers Churches it was a peculiar *office* to be a *Catechiſt*, and ſo *Clement*, *Origen*, and *Cyril*, were ſucceſſively Catechizers of the young ones in the famous Church of *Alexandria*; ſo their progreſs was exceeding remarkable, inſomuch as a learned Papiſt [*Gallenius in Catech:*] confeſſeth to the ſhame of their Church, that no convert was admitted εἰς τὸ φώτισμα, to *Baptiſme*, (which the Fathers called *Enlightning*, from the *Syriack* Interpreter, who *Heb.* 6. interprets φωτισθέντας, [*enlightned*] *baptizatos* (*baptized*) *qui non penè majorum rerum Chriſtianarum luce peritiaque præditus eſſet, quàm in noſtris* (*non dicam* (ſaith he) *vulgaribus Chriſtianis*) *ſed &* (*quod pudendum eſt*) *ſacerdotibus multis deprehendimus*, *i.e.* none but *ſuch* an one as for knowledge in the principles of Chriſtian Religion, went *beyond many a Romiſh Prieſt.* Inſomuch, that *Ambroſe* was thought fit in the preſent exigence of the Church of *Millain*, to be taken out of the Catechiſts form and made a *Biſhop*; And *Auguſtine*, whiles he was yet *Catechized*, wrote divers learned books, before his *Baptiſme*, as *Urſin* reports. Oh friends, that the pride of peoples hearts in theſe days ſhould make them as ſoon they are gotten

into

into the *teens*, (as we say) to think they are too old or too great to be Catechized! Truly I fear such persons will prove too old or too great to be good, seeing they turn their backs upon so excellent a means of knowledge and grace as this is, whereunto both *Solomon* the wisest of men, and the most glorious of Kings, (and that upon his own experience) and the *Spirit of God* by him, give so honourable a testimony for its usefulnesse, as in the words which I have read to you.

Train up a child, &c.

In the words there is observable,

1. The *duty* enjoyned, wherein
   1. Something *implied*, the person who is to doe.
   2. Somewhat *expresst*, viz.
      1. The *nature* of the act commanded, *Train up*.
      2. The *object* of it, and that is double;
         1. *Cui*, the person to be instructed, *a child*.
         2. *Quod*, the thing whereabout this act is exercised, *the way in which he should go*.

2. The *motive* annexed, wherein
   1. The *benefit* attained thereby, *he will not depart*.
   2. The *duration* of that benefit, *when he is old*.

1. The

1. The *persons upon whom* this duty lies, are implied in the *persons to whom* it is to be performed, *viz.* all such as have the relation of a *father* to *children*, and so it implies not only *natural* parents, but *Civil* and *Ecclesiastical* also, as *Schoolmasters*, *Tutors*, *Magistrates*, and *Ministers*; the care of all such, is in these words required, for the *training up a child in his way*; The *Magistrate* must preserve, and confirm by his Authority, a *form of sound words*, in which they may be instructed; the rest must in their places endeavour to drop into them those words, according as their age is capable of reception.

2. Their *duty* is [*training up*,] or as we render it in the Margin, *Catechizing*. The word is *hanoch*, and comes from חנך which signifies *to enter*, or *instruct in the elements*, or *first principles of any employment or profession*, and so we render it *training*, which is the initiation of a *souldier* to his employment, by which he is fitted for service. It signifies also *dedicavit*, or *consecravit*, to *consecrate*, or *set apart*, for an holy employment: lastly, *imbuit*, to *season*, a vessel, or *dip* a garment, in a colour that we would have it take; and so it is as if he said, let a child be *seasoned* in tender age with the *liquour* of saving knowledge, or let his soul be first *died* into the principles by which he should walk; that his after-conversation may look of the colour of his first grounds.

3. The *objectum cui*, or the person who is thus to be seasoned, or principled, is [*nagnar*] which word is sometimes taken for a person entred into that age which we call [*youth*] that age

age that follows *childhood* (so *Joseph* is called [*nagnar*] in *Egypt*, *Gen.* 41. 12. and *Gideons* son, *Judges* 8. 20.) and sometimes for children *able to go and speak*, as 2 *Kings* 2. 23. the children that mocked *Elisha* are called *nagnarim*; and lastly, sometimes and most frequently for children in an *Infant-age*, even as soon as they are *shaken* out of the mothers womb, seeing it comes from נער *excussit*, to *shake off*, or *evacuate*, &c. And so it implies the condition of all persons, who by their age are not confirmed or settled in their *way*, but are yet ductile and persuasible to choose their *way*; years of childhood and youth are our learning time, few *old* people, or such as are at *mans estate*, but have chosen their way, and are too well conceited of it, to admit of advice about it. And yet it may be that *nagnar, non ætate solùm, sed & judicio puerum significat*, as saith *Lavater*.

4. The *objectum quod*, or the mystery in which they are to be instructed, is [*the way in which they should goe*] 'tis emphatical in the Original; 'tis על־פי דרכו *secundum os viæ suæ*. Concerning which a Critick observeth, that it must be such a teaching as the party is capable of, as Nurses cut small bits for little children. This is true, but perhaps too nice here; the words signifie elsewhere *juxta mandatum*, as *Numb.* 3. 16 *Moses* is said to number the children of *Israel*, על־פי יהוה *according to the word of the Lord*, or (as the margin) *according to the mouth of the Lord*; so that this way must be *via secundum os*, the way of duty commanded by God, which is called a *mans way*, *Ps.* 119. 1, &c. *The good way*, *Jer.* Leigh Crit. Sacr.

Jer. 6.16. *the way of understanding*, Isa. 40. 14. *the way of life*, Jer. 21. 8. *the way of God*, Mark 12. 14. *the way of salvation*, Acts 16. 27. &c. *Michael Cope* in his Comment. reads, *In the entrance of way.*

5. The *benefit* of this religious care in all Governours of youth, is expressed by way of a *strong probability*, and implies thus much, that though it be not *impossible*, that a man who hath been well instructed in his *youth*, should apostatize, yet it is a most *unlikely* thing that such a man *will*: nay, it imports a promise on Gods part, to blesse the means used conscientiously to *youth* with constancy, and perseverance in *age*, which ought to be a very great encouragement to parents to *bring up their children in the nurture of the Lord*; forasmuch as even in this life they have this encouragement, that *their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, בי יגיע.

6. *When he is old*, though he be *senio confectus*, a very infirm old man, when he hath a *foot in the grave*, for so the word often signifies: or, when his age hath made him honourable, when he is an *elder or a Senatour*, (as such are called often *Senes*, and γέροντες, and we translate the word Senators, *Psal.* 105. 22.) if he come to Authority, he will govern others as he himself was principled in youth; the way he was set in, in his younger years, לא־יסור *non recedet, he will not recede from it*; the word is alike, *Psal.* 14 3. [they are *gone back*, *i. e.* turned *total Apostates*] he shall not totally turn his back upon it, so as to take up a quite contrary course. He may possibly *step* out of that way, but he will not

not *set* his *back* where his *face* was, and walk direct *Antipodes* to his former way. Hee may lose much of his spirits possibly, but he will seldome grow like *dead drink*, as the word is used, *Hos.* 4. 18. there will be some relish and savour in him to the last, of his first seasoning.

The words without any squeezing, will afford us easie Observations.

Doct. I. *There is a way, wherein* (even) *children ought to go.*

No age, not the youngest, is excused from its duties.

Doct. II. *Those who have the charge of their education, are bound to catechize or train them up in that way.*

Doct. III. *Good principles which have seasoned our younger years, wee ought to bee faithful and constant to in our age.*

Doct. IV. *A well-catechized and thoroughly grounded childhood, gives very likely hopes of faithfulnesse, and constancy in old age.*

I shall handle onely the *second* at large; and improve all the rest, according to the drift and intent of the Text, either by way of reason or motive, to the duty therein required.

Doct. *It is a duty that indispensably lies on all those who have charge of the education of children, to catechize, or train them up in the knowledge of that holy way of God, wherein they are to goe.*

This

This I shall fit for Application by

1. Proper *proofs*.
2. Pregnant *presidents*.
3. Demonstrative *arguments*.

(1.) *Proper proofs.*

*Deut.*6.7. Is an evident and undeniable place, *These words shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently*, or (as in the Hebrew) *whet* or *sharpen* them *unto thy children*. That is, shalt frequently inculcate the same things, by way of Catechisme, and shalt *talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, &c.* See *Deut.* 11.19. *Ps.* 78 5, 6: These shall suffice for the Old Testament. See one also in the New, *Ephes.*6.4. *Ye Fathers bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* This ἐκτρέφειν, denotes *feeding and nourishing*, and their spiritual food must bee νουθεσια κυριε, not only παιδεια, which signifies *civil education*, in manners, common honesty, moral vertue, and civil learning, but νουθεσια κυριε, *Religion* too. Not only feed them and keep them alive, (saith *Zanchy*) *facium hoc & animalia bruta*, beasts do thus much: not instruct them onely in manners and morality, for that *Heathens* did, and 'tis strange, even amazing what rules *Plutarch* and *Aristotle*, &c. give for this. But this *admonition of the Lord*, is *Christianorum proprium*, saith he, and implies a training them up in *verâ pietate, verâ religione, verâ Dei cognitione doctrinam cœlestem in liberorum animos semper instillando*; In true Religion, and the knowledge and worship of God.

2. *Pregnant*

(2.) *Pregnant presidents.*

1. Of *Catechizers.* Without doubt all the *Patriarchs* before *Moses* were such, for there being till *Moses* no *written Word* of God, the mind of God was undoubtedly conveighed from Fathers to children by *tradition*; and (as undoubtedly) through the diligence of *some* parents, and the neglect of *others* in this duty, the true knowledge of God, continued in *Seths*, and *Noahs*, and *Sems*, and *Abrahams* families, whiles most of the rest turned Heathens and Idolaters. Concerning *Abraham* the Scripture is expresse, *Gen.* 18. 19: *I know Abraham* (saith God) *that he will command his children, and his houshold after him, &c. q. d.* I know *Abraham* so well, that of all men he will not neglect it. *David* was so; see how he catechizeth *Solomon* his son, 1 *Kin.* 2. 2, 3. 1 *Chron.* 28. 9. *And thou*, Solomon, *my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing minde, &c.* So useful a way it was, that he invites *others* also to learn of him, *Ps.* 34. 11. the *Catechisme* is more large, *Prov.* 4. 4. &c. *Bathsheba* also, the mother, who took no lesse paine with *Solomon*, as appears from his own mouth, *Prov.* 31. 1. The Apostle *Paul* thought it not more beneath him to give *milk to babes*, i. e. to instruct ignorant and weak Christians in plain Catechisme grounds of Religion, more then to *speak wisdome*, i. e. higher truths among knowing and judicious Christians, 1 *Cor.* 3. 1, 2. whom he calls *perfect*. This also in 2 *Tim.* 1. 5. and 3. 15. compared, is the special commendation of *Lois* and *Eunice*. Afterwards it became a special office in the Church

Church to be a *Catechist* (*ut suprà.*)

2. *Of catechized.* Thus it is most likely, *Henoch*, holy *Henoch that walked with God*, and whom God so gloriously translated to himself, was thus instructed, and this appears from his very *name*, which is taken from the word in my Text *Chanak*, and signifies *catechized, or instructed.* Likely *Abel* was so before him. Concerning *Solomon* it is clear before. *Theophilus*, whom the Spirit of God honours so far as to admit him to be the first person to whom any portion of Scripture was dedicated, was thus *catechized* in the History of the Gospel, *Luke* 1.4. περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης. So was *Apollos*, to whom this commendation is given, that he was a man *mighty in the Scriptures*, *Acts* 18.25. he was κατηχημένος τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου. *Paul* himself was brought up at the *feet of Gamaliel*, *Acts* 22.3. a great Jewish Doctour. *Timothy* is commended, that ἀπὸ βρέφους, *from a suckling he had known the Scriptures*, 2 *Tim.* 3.15. Nay, what shall we say? when our *Saviour* himself condescends to be catechized? for so divers interpret, his hearing the Doctours, and asking them questions, which was the way of their training youth; and 'tis likely, so *Paul* was bred at the feet of *Gamaliel*. What famous *Fathers* were *Catechumeni*, I have in part shewn before. To whom let me adde *Arnobius*; And *Luther* professeth, though he were a studied Divine, yet he was beholden to Catechisme.

(3.) *Demonstrative Arguments.* The first is, in this Syllogisme.

Reason 1. *If there be a way wherein children must goe, and they cannot, without being catechized, know*

know that way; then it is the duty of those that have charge of them, so to catechize them.

But there is a way wherein they ought to go, and they cannot know this way without catechizing, &c.

First, *that children in their tenderest years, have a way in which they should go*, a duty belonging to their age is clear.

1. To God. In that God requires them *to remember their Creatour in the dayes of their youth*, *Eccles.* 12. 1. And the persons spoken to are those whose vain courses the wise man tartly reprehends in the clause of the former chapter. Where he mindes children, and young men alike, of the fickleness of those buds and blossomes, of their prime, *childhood*, saith he, *and youth are vanity*, *ch.* 11. 10.

Hence God commends *Timothy* for having *learned the Scriptures*, ἀπὸ βρέφους, from a *sucking child*, 2 *Tim.* 3. 15.

Solomon was instructed very young; for *Josephus* saith, he was but fourteen years old, others but twelve, when he began to reign, and his parents had catechized him before that age. And 'tis not inconsiderable, that God takes children themselves into Covenant, *Deut.* 29. 11.

2. This for their duty to God. They have also a *duty* which they owe *to parents*, Ephes. 6. 1.

And both these are clear; in that God appoints *correction* as a great means to keep them in, even from their Infancy. Now God allows not correction but for faults, and there can be no fault where there is no duty. But God appoints the rod for little children, See *Pro.* 22. 15.

Foolishneſs, i. e. wickedneſſe, *is bound in the heart of a child,* implying that there is a bundle of it, and that it is fixed, ſetled, naturall; what then is the way to remove it? *the rod of correction ſhall fetch it out.*

Sol. 23. 13. *Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou beateſt him with the rod he ſhall not dye;* implying that there are damning corruptions in Infants hearts, and the way to ſave them from damnation is correction. Sure God doth not promiſe ſalvation to children barely becauſe they are whipped and corrected; but as the end of that means when rightly uſed, ſeeing the rod is an inſtrument to bring the child into a way of ſalvation. And 'tis obſervable that the way is נער in both places, as in my Text.

2. *That they cannot know this way without inſtruction,* is cleare,

1. If we conſider, that none is borne a Chriſtian, farther then in profeſſion, *Job* 11. 12. *Man is born like a wild aſſes colt.* Vaine man, or empty man is fooliſh, and he is born ſo; like an *aſſe*, the dulleſt and fooliſheſt of all creatures (fooliſh to a proverb) and like a *wild aſſe*, the dulleſt and moſt unteachable of Aſſes, and ſuch a *colt* is man borne.

2. That we have no knowledge by inſpiration without the uſe of means. A child would neither ſpeak nor go, were he not taught; though God can give both without means, yet he will not, ſo neither will he infuſe knowledge immediately, having appointed means for us to uſe to that end. If a child be bred where the name of God, and Chriſt, and religion is not heard, needs muſt he be an Atheiſt. 2. Rea-

2. Reason teacheth us, that when we attempt to alter the naturall disposition of any thing, we must begin betimes. A crooked tree will *break* rather then *bend*, when old, that would have been set straight when it was young, though it were never so crooked; and when we will tame any creatures that are by nature wild, we take them young, and use them to the discipline wch we mean to bring them to. A young *horse* is fittest to learn a *pace*, and a young *Spaniell* to *hunt*, and therefore we put them to it in that age. We deale so with *children* in the things of the *world*; wee instruct them in reading, writing, needle-work, musick, in their tender yeares. Hereby we condemn our selves in the presence of God and good men, if we neglect to take the same course for principling them in the wayes of God. A childs age is tender and pliable, a young twig that you may bend any way, if you take him betimes; but if you let him get head, and grow stout before you handle him, (besides that he must needs grow crooked, seeing 'tis so natural to him) he will be incapable of being reduced to order. When persons are children, fond parents thinke them *too young*, and when they are a little grown towards men and women, they think themselves *too old* to be instructed; and so many poor sottish soules (what between their parents negligence, and their own pride and conceitednesse) perish without understanding, and as they live, dye like beasts. *Ergo*, 'tis said, *he that loves his child chastens betimes*, Pro. 13.24.

3. *If God requires constancy and preseverance in a good way to the end of the longest life, then (as a mans*

means thereunto) he requires, youth should be catechized in that way. But God requires constancy and perseverance in age. Ergo.

Here are two propositions to be proved.

1. That God expects a man should persevere in a good way, *ad extremam usq; senectutem.* And I hope I shall not need to say much, onely see how *Paul* chargeth *Timothy* concerning the *truths* of Jesus Christ. *Hold fast the form of sound words,* and φύλαξον *keep charity that good thing which was committed to thee,* speaking of Doctrine, 2 *Tim.* 1. 13, 14. and so 3. 14, 15.

And so for the *wayes* of God, we are in many places pressed to *endure to the end, Mat.* 10. 22. *To hold fast the beginning of our confidence to the end, Heb.* 3. 6, 14. *To hold fast our profession,* 4. 13. 10. 23. See another charge to *Timothy,* 1 *Tim.* 5. 13, 14. So 1 *Tim.* 1. 18, 19. he hath a command concerning both.

And certainly there is nothing more unworthy a *Christian,* nay a *man,* then that prodigious ficklenesse of persons in this our wanton age, wherein the mindes of men undergoe more frequent changes then their garments, and become fickle in every thing but their own ficklenesse. Certainly, the Lord hates such *Chamæleons,* and *Weathercocks in Religion,* such *children* in discretion, as are *turned about with every wind of false doctrine, and fall away from their stedfastnesse,* Eph. 4. 14. 2 Pet. 3. 17.

2. Now *that catechizing in youth is a great security against Apostacy in age.* My Text in the latter part abundantly testifies; and when the Apostle presseth perseverance on *Timothy,* whence doth

doth he draw his argument? is it not from his initiation into that way in infancy? 2 *Tim.* 3. 14,15. *continue* —— *knowing that* ἀπὸ βρέφους, *&c.* See the end that God aimes at in enjoyning parents their duty, *Psal.* 78.4.56,

Indeed, when we come to yeares of discretion, we must not then stick to truths and wayes barely, because we learned them in youth; for upon this account, a man might be excused for obstinacy in an erroneous or sinfull way; but we are bound to try those things afterwards, which we learn in youth by rote; and as farre as we find them good and sound, to be thereby the more encouraged to persevere in them. Wee reverence truths and duties for our parents sake who teach us when we are *young*; but afterwards when we finde the worth of them by a riper judgement of our own, we reverence our parents for their sakes.

1. We perceive that as a tree is bent to the hand when 'tis young, so it growes commonly ever after.

2. Prepossession (we say) is 11 points of the Law, and if God get the first possession of the heart in our infancy, he will not be easily cast out againe. 'Twill cost such a man as had good education from infancy, many an hard tugge and pull of conscience, if he turne a side from the way afterwards.

3. Men ordinarily count it their honor to be constant, and indeed it is so, if it be a good way, for it is a beame of the Divine Nature which is *unchangeablenesse*. But though the way be never so *bad*, yet (ordinarily) when we are entered in it

in our infancy, we hardly leave it. *That that is bred in the bone will hardly out of the flesh.* And hereditary *sins* and *errours*, like hereditary *diseases*, are hardly ever cured, *Jer.* 44.16,17. *The Queen of heaven* could not be ungodded by all *Jeremies* words, for they had been bred in Idol-worship, and therefore they will continue in it. If a thing be but *indifferent* the parents commands render it even necessary in the eyes of children, to observe it. See in the *Rechabites*, *Jer.*35 6.7,8. And the Apostle *Paul* was περισσοτέρως ζηλωτὴς ὑπάρχων πατρικῶν παραδόσεων. *Gal.* 1. 14. *exceeding zealous* herein.

And no doubt but the same principles would have some influence upon the constancy of children in good things, if they were as carefully instilled into them as evill ones are.

4. Adde to these, lastly, That God is especially engaged to such as are so principled, to keep them in the way; and so some read the words in the Text, in a promissory sense, *he shall not depart from it.* And truely I much incline to that reading, seeing God intends it for an incouragement to parents to traine up their children in a good way, and that not meerly morall, but divine, and such an encouragement as may give them the greatest security against their apostacy; and he could give them none, like engaging himselfe to keep them in the way. See how confidently *David* prayes on this account, *Psal.*71. 5, 6,9.14,17,18.

Object. But you will say then, how come so many that are well-bred, to apostatize?

Answ. I answer,(1.)either they are but *sleightly* principled by parents; and if they sow *little*, they

they cannot look to reap *much*; or (2.) they do not *water* what they *sow*, with prayer, as they should; or (3.) they undo by their example what they do by instruction; (4.) or lastly, their children were never truly the better for their education, but lived in a *godly family*, as divers do in a *prison*, and watched earnestly for a manumission from it by increase of yeares; and 'tis no wonder if such be carried away, when opportunity is offered, that watch an opportunity to escape before it is offered: No wonder if the fruit fall when it is grown great, which was rotten at the core from the first.

Use. 1. Severe *reprehension* to those parents of all sorts and sizes who neglect this duty. Now of these there are severall sorts, and the reproofe must be directed to them in proportion as it is deserved.

I. Some herein offend out of *ignorance*, not so much of the *quòd* (for that I hope I have removed by what hath been said) but the *quomodo* how they must do it. They are (themselves) ignorant of the first principles of Religion, though *by the time* which they have had in the Church of God, they might have been enabled to *teach others*; a thing which the Apostle *Paul* cryes shame on, *Heb.* 5. 12.

(1.) How many *gray beards, and hoary heads*, shall a Minister, upon a serious search, find in a Congregation, that are yet to learn the A. B. C. of the Religion which they have lived in and professed from their infancy? Truely, that such persons are Christians, is more from the *hand* of *providence*, then the *grace* of *perseverance*. If the

State hold to the Faith, they may, but if the Religion of the *clime* alter, they that have lived Proteſtants in profeſſion ſixty or ſeventy years, I will not be bound for one to a thouſand of them that they ſhall not dye Papiſts, or Mahumetans. I feare when we ſhall hereafter enquire into the knowledg as well as converſations of our Communicants, it will appeare ſo.

(2.) How many *young Striplings* are there that get them Wives and are fathers of children, before they have wit to teach them any thing but childiſh games, and are fitter to be their *playmates*, when they have begotten them, then their *parents*? Such as the Primitive Church would have kept among the Catechumeni, many years, beyond the age in which among us they are *Fathers* and *Mothers*; and 'tis pitty, among us, a married condition is growne to be a protection againſt Catechizing. We ordinarily condemn the wiſedome of ſuch perſons as marry, and get children before they know how to *maintaine* them; and is it not as much a ſhame for men to get children ere they can tell how to *catechize* them? I profeſſe for my part, I thinke it a very unfitting thing that any perſons in a Chriſtian Common-wealth ſhould marry and become parents, ere they can give an account of their faith. How ſhall they engage to the Congregation to educate their children in the Faith that they know not? I muſt beſeech, nay charge, ſuch parents and maſters of families, to get them Catechiſmes, and let them not be a ſhamed to learn at home with their children, leſt their children out ſtrip them in knowledge, and riſe up in judge-

judgement against their parents. Otherwise, I make no question that by that time I have followed this exercise one twelve-moneth (if they will be so good to their childrens soules, as to send them hither) by the blessing of God, I shall make the least child here, that can but go and speak, shame a great part of the elder people of this Congregation.

II. Others offend out of *scruple*, to whom I shall speake more in the next Use; onely let me tell them, that conscience that makes men scruple sin is safely tender, but an erroneous dangerous one, that occasions scrupling duties; that (ordinarily) a sleight and careless, and unprofitable living under duties whilst we are satisfied in them, occasions our dislike of them; and that it is just with God it should be so that God should suffer themselves to put their consciences as a barre to the enjoyment of the benefit of such duties, who once made no conscience to benefit by them at all, when they did enjoy them.

III. Others offend *wilfully*, and therefore the more fearfully, and desperatly. There be some *fools* in the world, as *Solomon* saith, that *hate knowledge*, *Pro.* 1.22. and no wonder if they that hate it themselves, will labour to keep their children from it as much as they can. Now as this hatred of knowledge seldom possesseth any man so desperately as that he should become an enemy to it for its own sake, but he therefore hates it because it doth (and so far hates it as it doth) discover some evills in him, which he labours to conceale and maintaine, as our Saviour renders the cause, *Joh.* 3.20. so is this principle that engageth

gageth divers persons so violently to set themselves against this Ordinance, commonly begotten in them by one of these three things.

1. *Errour* in their judgements. Men that hold heterodox and unsound opinions, and desire to nuzle up their families in them, are afraid, if the light of Catechism-truths get into their families, they shall not enjoy their deare opinions so quietly; and seducers that *creep into houses*, and make *silly men and women* their prey, are *bodily afraid* (as we say) lest this course should deliver the prey from their teeth, and therefore they make it their businesse to keep all that they can from this holy exercise. They know 'tis best juggling by a dimme light, and fishing in mudded waters, and a cloudy day.

2. Or secondly *viciousnesse* in their lives. They know whilst the light is shut out of a roome, a little cleanlinesse will passe for a great deal: but if the Sun get in, he will shew a great deal of dust which before was over-looked. They know that a little Religion will go farre to get them a name in an uncatechized Town or Family; but when the very children and servants shall be able by the Word of God to examin all their actions, and they shall have as many *reprovers* in a neighbourhood or family as *persons*, they think this a tedious trouble; nay, and (possibly) they expect some service from them, which light will hinder.

3. Or thirdly, *Envy*. This moved the *Jews* to hinder *Pauls* preaching, *Acts* 17. 5. 13. 45, 46.

To those of all three sorts, I must say this in the

the Name of the Lord, as *Paul* said to *Elymas the Sorcerer*, Acts 13. 10. *O ye wretches, that are full of subtiltie and all mischiefe, you children of the devill, and enemies of all righteousnes, will ye not yet cease to pervert the righteous wayes of the Lord?* Is it not enough that you are resolved to damn *your owne* soules, but you must draw *others* into hell with *you?* Know this, that the more you occasion damnation to, the deeper will your owne damnation be. Beleeve it, all the curses of your children and servants that are damned for *want of knowledge*, will fall on your heads. If the wilfull murther of the bodies of men be so hainous a sinne, O what an horrible guilt is there in the wilfull murther of souls!

Use. 2. *Exhortation* to the conscientious discharge of this duty, by all whom it doth concern. To set home this, I shall

1. *Shew* on whom it lyes.
2. *Direct* what course should be taken to effect it.
3. *Lay down* some inducements to it.
4. *Remove* impediments and discouragements.

I. The *persons* on whom this duty is chargeable, are (in generall) all that have the name of *parents*. Now that name, and so duty is common to all *superiours*, though not to all in the same way. *Magistrates* are to teach, and so to catechize, *favendo, protegendo, præcipiendo*. So *Jehoshaphat* and his Princes, 2 *Chron.* 17. 7, 8, 9. taught, by sending out, and accompanying with their power

power and assistance, teaching Priests. So *Hezekiah*, chap. 30. 22. and *Josiah* 35. 2. taught by *speaking comfortably to*, and encouraging them.

Naturall Parents and *Masters* of *families* are to do it, *partly* in their own persons in private. This was *Abrahams* care, *Gen.* 18, 19. and *Davids*, &c. *ut suprà*, and *partly*, by causing them to present themselves to the publick instruction of the Minister, whose work is to teach them publickly, and take an account of their growth in knowledge. That this is the Ministers duty, and so by consequence, the duty of such Governours to present their charges before them will appear, in that (1) they are not onely shepheards to the stronger *sheep*, but to the *lambs* also, and Christ requires they should be fed as they can beare, *John* 21. 15. *feed my little lambs*, τὰ ἀρνία μου. The Apostle *Paul* had to deale with the raweſt and youngest as well as the most experienced and strongest; and so had *milke* for them as well as *stronger meat*, and *wisdome for the perfect*. It appeares also from *Heb.* 13. 17. where the Holy Ghost chargeth the souls of the whole flock on them, as that of which they must *give account*; and if so, it is supposed they must know the state of them, and must have proper means allowed them whereby to be able to perform it: and for this, no means so proper as Catechizing. Besides, hereby they are enabled to discover the care or negligence of Governours of Families in their respective charges, and deale with them in their Ministry accordingly. Adde to all this, that many of such Governors and Parents have need to be catechized themselves, and then the family are

are more properly and immediately under the Pastors charge and inspection then otherwise; and such of all others (though they usually throught pride *are*, yet) have least reason to *be* backward in presenting their people to this Ordinance.

II. But what if we cannot prevaile with our Children and Servants, to submit themselves thereunto, what course must we take with them? (may Parents and Masters say.)

Answ. Even the same course, or a more severe, which you would, in case they neglected their duty to your selves.

1. Instruct them your selves, in their duty that they are bound *to obey you in the Lord*, Ephes. 6. 1. Yea, in *all things* that are not sinfull, and I hope none is so vile as to charge this duty with sinne, see *Col.* 3. 22.

2. Charge this their duty upon them in the presence of God, with all Authority, as they will answer it at the Judgement-Seat of Christ. If this succeed not,

3. Appoint proper penalties for every neglect in Gods Service; abridge them of those liberties for recreation, and other refreshments of your smiles and countenance, (things which are in your power to bestow or deny) till they conforme.

4. Correct them, and that more severely for any neglect of this kinde, then for any offence towards your own persons, *Pro.* 10. 13. 13. 24. 26. 3. 29. 15.

5. If they be incorrigible, discharge them the family, *Psal.* 101. 4, 6. the presence of such persons

is

is more hurtfull (if the presence and blessing of God be any thing worth) then their absence, *Philemon* 11. *Onesimus*, when unconverted, was an unprofitable servant, but converted, became profitable both to the Church and his Master, and whereas *Philemon* had before either turned him off, or let him depart, and counted it *a good riddance*, (as we use to say) *Paul* never pressed him to entertain him again, till he was assured that he was become gracious, See *Gen.* 21. 9, 10, 11 yet their usage must be different, as they be either scrupulous, or shamefaced, or obstinate; if there be *invincible scrupulousnesse*, these hindrances must be more gently, and with more conscientious care removed; so farre, as that it may appeare, that the judgement *is*, (or *ought* upon sufficient meanes of conviction to be) satisfied, and then to enjoyn obedience; you may judge if conscience scruple this, by conscientious scruples in other things.

Shamefastnesse must be wrought out by bringing them to such duties by degrees. *Obstinacy* must be presently knocked down by the authority and power of the Master or Parent, it being a contestation with him for the rule of the family.

III. Motives to this duty concern,

{ 1. *Superiours*, or Parents.
{ 2. *Inferiours*, or Children.

1. To *Superiours*. Consider,

1. Religion makes the best servants and children, yea, subjects; Those that have sucked in a con-

conſcientious knowledge of their duty in their tender yeares, will doe more for a *word* then others for many *blows*. *Abrahams* family was a *catechized* family, and ſee how ſweet an harmony there is in all the parts: his *wife*, an humble dutiful & obedient wife: The Scripture takes eſpeciall notice that *Sarah called Abraham Lord, and obeyed him*, 1 *Pet.* 3.6. His Son *Iſaac*, what an example was he of ſubjection to his Father, hee trudgeth after him with his load of wood that was to ſacrifice him, he reſignes himſelfe wholly to him in the choice of his Wife, he ſhewes his pious education in his private devotions, *Gen.* 22.6.24.4.63. His *Servant Eliezer*, what a patern of wiſedome, piety, and faithfulneſſe gives he, *chap.* 24. And it cannot be otherwiſe, but that Religion making them to behold Gods holy Law ſeconding all the commands of their *Superiours*, muſt be a principle of univerſall obedience unto them. Now religious principles (*ut ſuprà*) are not *ex traduce*, borne with us, but taught; all the regular obedience that you can expect, muſt be *in the Lord*, and how ſo, if they know not what that duty meanes?

2. This is the way to make *Families*, *Churches*, and ſo (in an eſpeciall manner) to engage the bleſſing of God unto them, and the curſe to the contrary. Though catechizing carry not grace with it inſeparably, yet (ordinarily) the want of it is evidence enough of little grace in a family; needs muſt ſuch *families* be among them *that call not upon the name of God*, and ſo lye under a fearfull imprecation, *Jer.* 10.2. For *how can they call upon him, of whom they have not heard?* Rom. 10.

10. 14. An uncatechized family is an Heathen family. Now where God is owned in a family, what a blessing comes with it; see in *Potiphars* family, *Labans* family, *Gen.* 39. 5. and 30. 27. If one godly man in a family blessed it, how would many?

3. By this means a *plantation of Churches* may be erected. People talke of *gathering Churches*, but their way (generally) is *scattering* them, as many precious Ministers find by sad experience, their Congregations being parcelled out into private meetings; but this is a warrantable way of gathering Churches. Catechize your own familyes where you have authority, and when they go abroad in the world, whereever they light, they will drop some savorie knowledge, and leave some relish behind them. Thus is a good man κατὰ ἀγαθὸν, and families are nurseries to Church and State. *Dan.* 12. 4. *Many come to and fro, and knowledge is multiplied.*

4. This is a notable way to preserve *union in families*, when they walke (all of them) by the same known common principles. The reason of division in many families is, that they are persons of severall principles and wayes. It may be in a family of ten persons (if of age) they are all members of ten severall Congregations. The husband will not communicate with the wife, nor the child with the father, nor servants with their masters; whence this? is it not from want of early grounding them all upon common principles?

5. If they be *saved*, you will be rewarded as instruments, *Dan.* 12. 3. If they be *damned*, you are

are, cleare their destruction will be of themselves and their *blood upon their own heads*: Otherwise think what heavy curses will be belched out against you to all eternity, by those whose destruction hath been promoted, by your neglect of teaching them better. Let none of yours have cause to say, you suffered them to perish without instruction.

6 (As for *children* in speciall) *Parents*, you have great reason to endeavour to make them knowing & gracious, for their natural blindnes and corruption they are beholden to you for, they are hereditary diseases. You would faine have your children acknowledge themselves beholden to you for their being, for what *I* pray you? for making them children of wrath, and heires of damnation, a condition a thousand times worse then not to be? A parent is a mans deadliest enemy that begets him to hell, and never endeavours to recover him from that condition.

7. God useth to punish the neglect of this duty, by making those persons the greatest plagues to a parent whom he is most careless to educate with a strict hand in the knowledge and practise of their duty. Lamentable examples are in *Absolom* and *Adonijah*, about whom it seemes *David* took least care for their strict education, See 2 *Kings* 1. 6.

If you let them *sow wild oates*, you (as well as they) may *reap* repentance in time.

2. To *Inferiours*, and those of the younger sort, (especially) I shall say a few things also by way of encouragement.

1. God values a knowing and religious childhood and youth at an high price. See how he calls for our young dayes, *Eccles* 12.1. the argument is remarkable. [*before the dayes come wherein thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.* q. d. *Wilt thou leave those dayes for God, which thou shalt bee weary of thy selfe? Will God take pleasure in that part of thy time that thou canst take none in? Thy dayes of choyce* (so the word signifies) *the choycest dayes should be filled up with the choycest imployments.*] It is a prety observation of some *Rabbins* upon *Levit.* 1.14 that the Lord will admit *turtles* for a sacrifice at any age, but *pigeons* it is expressely required that they be young; and they give this reason, because *turtles* are savoury meat at any age, but *pigeons* when they grow *old*, grow *tough* and illrelished. Truly friends, we are not born turtles, (for such are onely Christs sanctified ones, *Psal.* 74. 19) we are pigeons. Let us remember that there is no acceptable relish in old pigeons, See 2 *Tim.* 3. 15. God promiseth such especiall mercie, *Prov.* 8. 17.

2. There is none of you but is old enough to *dye*, and old enough to be *damned*. *Rom.* 5. 14. Therefore it concerns you to get the knowledge of the way of salvation early. You early contrive how you shall live in this world, and are contented upon that account to learn a Trade, because you know not how soon you may be left to your selves, Oh be as wise for your souls!

3. This is the *learning-age*; if ever you will know the things of God, it must be now; hereafter when you come into the world, you will plead

Plead multitudes of imployments to divert you, you will not be able to find time to learn : Now you have no affaires of your own to put these more weighty ones out of your heads, you have not the temptation of shame to acknowledge your ignorance; & this to those of grown age is a great enemy to learning, especially in this way; they are ashamed now to learn, lest they should confesse they have been ignorant so long.

4. You can never make any regular profit of the publick hearing (nay very little of private reading) of the Word without the help of Catechisme. As for *preaching*, Catechisme-points are the tools, by the help whereof a Minister makes Sermons, and people understand them. Can you understand a discourse concerning any trade, and yet be altogether ignorant of the names and nature of the tools that are used in it? And as for *reading*, you will be able to make little use of that also, except you can reduce what you read to some Methodicall head, or other of Divinity, which you must be beholden to Catechismes for.

5. Nay further, some of the Ancients, have censured the ignorance of Catechisme very highly. *Clemens Alexandrinus*, (the great Catechist in the famous Church of *Alexandria*, whence he hath his title) saies roundly, οὐκ ἐστὶ πιστεύσαι ἀνευκατηχήσεως. *That there is no beleeving without catechizing principles:* And a whole *Councill* determined many yeares since, that *those are not worthy the name of Christians that are not acquainted with Catechisme.* *Aquis. Concil. Can. 14.*

6. The condemnation that lights upon any

of you at the last day for wilfull ignorance will be an heavy condemnation. Read and tremble (you of *Reading*) at the fearfull place, *Matth.* 10. 15. If it be (even under temporall evils) so sad an aggravation, to consider that a man hath *hated instruction, and not obeyed the voice of his Teachers, nor inclined his eare to them that instructed him* (as it seems it is by *Solomon*, *Prov.* 5. 12.) how much more aggravating will it be to thee hereafter in *hell*, to consider that thou didst once live in a family where Catechizing and other exercises of family-religion were in use, that thou hadst thy abode in a *Town* where thou didst, or mightest at least, heare a publick Catechisme every *Lords day*; and yet thou didst either *sloathfully neglect*, or *maliciously hate* those precious meanes which (by Gods blessing) might have kept thee from that place of torment?

7. This is found (by experience) the most *profitable and compendious way* of teaching all *Arts and Sciences*, to draw the principles of it into short *Systemes* and *Tables*, and the Tutor to read Lectures upon them, and take an account of his Scholars how they understand them. If you put a child to learn English, he must begin with his A. B. C. & the Teacher must not only take the book and read the lesson to the child about the letters, but examine him *which is which*, if hee will have him expert in so triviall a thing as an *Horn-book*. Catechismes are such A. B. C. without which you cannot *spell* any sound Divinity, and if you do not take the same course in them, with young novices, we may preach to them while

while we will, to little purpose; and they hear, but to as little.

IV. The *impediments* to this duty I shall take notice of, and (by Gods help) take away in their order.

1. On the *Parents and Governours* part, who should present their little ones to this Ordinance, there are two scruples (slender ones, I must needs say, yet such as are strong enough to stumble slender Christians, and especially take hold of such as are tainted with some principles of Anabaptisme; but as small as they are, wee will stoop to take them off.)

Object. And first it is *objected*, That if the children so catechized be very young, and not capable of understanding what they learne and repeat, this will prove nothing but a meer *prophanation of the Name of God*, an Ordinance of his being hereby misused, whilst it is performed by *rote* in a perfunctory way.

Answ. To which I *answer*.

1. The *intellectualls* of some children are very *early ripe*, and some things in Religion are so plain, that they may easily be understood. The speeches that have dropt from some children at four, five, six, years old, do sufficiently demonstrate how early some truths have been apprehended by the understandings, yea, and wrought upon the consciences of little ones.

2. This Objection seems to crosse legges with the *expresse Word* of God, which commends *Timothy* for acquaintance with the Scriptures even from his long-coats and cradle, 2 *Tim.* 3. 15.

3. This holds as strongly against *instructing elder persons known to be wicked and prophane*, because there is more likelyhood that they will prophane those holy things. And yet no Minister is to take the prophaneneſſe of his hearers as a ſufficient diſcharge from his duty, in *inſtructing even thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, to ſee if God will at any time give them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth*, 2 *Tim.*2.25.

4. It is very unlikely, that *thoſe children* who cryed *Hoſanna* to our Saviour Chriſt, *Mat.* 21. 16, 17. *underſtood* what they cryed, but (it is likely) cryed with the multitude; for they were ſuch for whom our Saviour makes an *Apology* under the name of *babes and ſucklings*, and yet he received and juſtified them in ſo doing. Had our Saviour been of the objectors minde, he would have *blamed* them with the Phariſees, rather then *juſtified* them.

5. There is more danger of their prophanation of the Name of God for want of inſtruction. We ſhould not (I beleeve) hear ſo many *oaths*, and *curſes*, and *idle exclamations* upon the *Name of the Lord*, as we daily do, even from thoſe that can ſcarce *ſpeake* or *goe* alone, were they taught betimes that theſe things are wicked and ſinfull. They might be kept from theſe *prophane practiſes* very early by the fear of *hell*, as well as from *crying*, by *bug-beares*, &c. did men poſſeſſe them as early with *true* feares, as they doe with *vaine* ones.

6. A little, a very little underſtanding will render a *duty poſſible* and *currant* from a little one, when a greater meaſure will not ſuffice to the

the performances of *elder* persons. We our selves indulge a great many childish faylings in the duty we expect from our little children, which we will not a like beare withall from greater boyes. And God *accepting according to what wee have, and not according to what we have not*, gives us sufficient ground to believe he walks by the same rule.

7. What they learn then, though but by rote, may *stick in their memories*, and *work upon their consciences* many years after. And how knowest thou, O man, but the light thou didst kindle in the mind of thy child, may be *renewing* (at least) *restraining* light to him many years after thou art gone?

Object. It is farther objected, That *our way of catechizing* is a *forme*, the asking some set Questions, and receiving set Answers to them; and the Objectors think all *Formes* unlawful.

Answ. 1. But what thinke these men of a *Forme of sound words*, 2 *Tim.* 1. 13. is that also unlawfull? and if it be not, then either our formes of Catechisme-Questions and Answers must be made up of *unsound words*, (which if they say, they must prove too) or else that they are a form will no way (to the judgement of Gods Spirit) prejudice them.

2. So were the *ten Commandements*, *Deut.* 6. 6, 7. and yet God commands the Jewes, *to teach them their children, and whet them diligently upon them.* Surely we need not feare teaching our children the *ten Commandements*, when God himselfe appoints them their *Lesson*, we that are but his *ushers*, may safely require their learning it.

3. That our Catechiſmes are thus a forme, doth moſt anſwer *one main end of Catechizing*, which is to teach men and women from their Infancy to think and ſpeak the *ſame things* which is neceſſary in a well-ordered Church; thoſe perſons being much endangered to loſe *orthodox notions*, who are ignorant of *orthodox expreſſions*

And thus much ſhall ſerve to anſwer the *elder children* in their weak objections, I meane thoſe *parents* who throw away the Ordinance of God upon ſuch *childiſh* exceptions.

I now come to remove the hinderances on the behalfe of the *younger ones*, by which they are feared from giving their due attendance hereupon.

Object. And firſt *Shamefacedneſſe* is pleaded by ſome, who pretend they can, and would willingly anſwer in *private*, but they have not confidence enough to appear in *publick*.

Anſw. 1. Art thou indeed ſhame-faced? the more need haſt thou *reſolutely* to undertake the work, by how much thou haſt beyond others a *temptation* in thy very *conſtitution* againſt it. One part of our ſpirituall watchfulneſſe, and dayly mortification, conſiſts in finding out, and overcomming *conſtitution-ſins*.

2. Many that pretend *Shamefacedneſſe* in doing *good*, quickly enough grow *paſt ſhame* in doing *evill*; and 'tis naturall to moſt men by means of original corruption, to bluſh more in doing their *duty*, then in acting *ſin*.

3. *Shame* belongs to *ſin*; ſhame and ſin were both born into the world in a day. *Adam* knew

no

no *shame* till sin had made him *naked*; shame of duty is a sinfull shame. If this be an Ordinance of Christ (as I have proved it is) then to be ashamed of it will (I doubt) appeare a *deniall of Christ* (in a sort) at the last day, for being *ashamed of Christ*, i.e. in any truth, duty, or way of his, is so interpreted (*Matth.* 10. 33. *Marke* 8. 38. compared) and then take heed lest Christ be *ashamed of thee before God the Father, and his holy Angels.*

4. Thou art offended thou art call'd upon for a *publick account*. But consider,

1. That many *elder persons* may learne by this means who are not able to read at home.

2. That those that *can*, and *do not*, may by their readinesse be shamed into some endeavors lest they be out-gone by children in so necessary and weighty a knowledge.

3. That thou wilt one day have occasion to claime the *priviledge of Communion* with the Church in higher Ordinances, and canst thou think it reasonable that the Church should give thee *the right hand of fellowship*, who hast by no publick satisfactory evidence declared thy selfe to be a christian? it may be they know thou art baptized, (but for any thing farther that they know of thee) thou mayst have renounced thy Baptisme and Christianity, before thou commest to claime those privileges, and accountest them meere matters of forme, as too many now doe.

Object. A second objection of some is this; They shall be *singular* in reviving an *unusuall exercise*, they shall be *gazed* upon and *laught* at, by their

their fellowes, who out of prophane principles keep away.

Answ. To which I answer.

1. But *child* consider; Thou shouldst not be discouraged in the way to heaven, though thou walk it *alone*; will it be any trouble to a man when he is gotten thither, that he had no company upon the way.

2. 'Tis a great *honor* to *be alone in a good way*, nay, the greatest honour that can be, to forsake all *company* for *Christ* and *duties* sake. One *Lot* in *Sodom*, one *Noah* in the old world, kept up the fear and service of God, and see how Scripture honours them for it; so *Elijah* (to his seeming) was the onely man left that owned the truth of God in *Ahabs* dayes, and yet he was not discouraged for want of company.

3. The men of this world are not discouraged but encouraged rather, if they drive the *only trade* in their profession, in the places wherein they live: men are willing to *grow rich alone*, and why not to grow *rich* in *grace* and saving *knowledge* alone?

4. It may be thou needest not goe *alone*, if thou hadst once begun, others by thy example may be induced to *follow*; they are loath to *begin* as well as thou; they doe not so much doubt they shall be *alone*, as draw back from being *first*. Now if thou canst in a good way be a leader to others, it is farre more honourable.

5. Thou art affraid thou shalt be *gazed upon* and *laught at*; but consider, that it is the usuall lot of the *best* to be so handled; so in *Isaiahs* time the

the Saints were looked on as *signes and wonders*, *Isa.*8.18.

6. 'Twill be a more grievous thing to *them* to be (one day) *laught at by God*, then it is now to *you* to be *laught at by them*; and this will hereafter return into their bosomes, *Pro.*1. 26.3.34.

7. Use the means, and get the *start* of them in saving knowledge, and thou wilt discerne them to be farre more *ridiculous*.

Object. It may be thou mayest object, that thou art competently *growen in yeares*, thou lookest towards *man* or *woman*, and this is an exercise that is more proper for *little children*.

Answ. 1. Alas! how many be there that thinke it too *childish* a thing to be *catechized*, who by the help of that Ordinance, are outstripped in knowledge by those *children* whom they condemn.

2. If thy *knowledge* be not *proportionable* to thy *age* and *growth*, thou art yet a *child in understanding*, and hast more cause to be ashamed thereof, then of any meanes wherein thou mayest be improved therein.

3. Look upon the *examples*, before argued, of the *primitive Fathers*, who continued under this Ordinance for divers yeares after they had attained to mans estate, and thought it no discredit to stand among the *catechized*, till they were called forth to be *teachers* of others.

4. Take heed of *pride and self-conceit*, there being no greater enemy to the attainment of spirituall knowledge, then a conceit that men have

have attained enough already, *Prov.* 26. 12.

Thus have I answered the most common and ordinary objections, and excuses upon which this usefull Ordinance, in these dayes of liberty, is laid aside. The Lord grant that these plain lines may so far prevaile (through his blessing) for the restitution thereof to this Church and Nation; that in stead of that *notionall brain*-knowledge so much in fashion, we may see a *practicall heart*-knowledge advanced, and that with so much improvement in old and young, that it may *cover the Land as the waters cover the Sea*, untill we all arrive at that perfection *truely*, which some *groundlessely* conceit they have attained already, that we shall *need* no more to *speak every one to his neighbour, and to his brother, saying, know the Lord; but that all may know him from the greatest to the least, being all taught of God.* Amen.

FINIS.

Reader, before thou read, do the Author the right, and thy self the courtesie, to correct these materiall faults, and passe by litterall ones.

ERRATA.

In the Dialogue, in the Epistle, in some copies, *p.*4. dele, of all ages. *p.*8. *l.*22. r. faction, *p.*9. *l.*4. *p.*15. *l.*3. *p.*20. *l.*4. *p.*28. *l.*21. *p.*32. *l.*28. *p.*34. *l.*17. r. their, for your. *p.*9. *l.*18. r: consider. *l.*24. r. the converts, *p.*13. *l.*28. blot out more. *p.*20. *l.*3. r. wit. *p.*21. *l.*3. r. meere. *l.*4, 5. blot out the first at most, *p.*27. *l.*9. r. thence. *p.*29. *l.*5. r. to, for by. *p* 39. *l.*3. put a comma after new, *p.*41. *l.*6. r roote. *p.*24. *l.*15. r. art, and *p.*49. *l.*9. r. he that. *p.*52. *l.*14. r. Anabaptisme. *p.*53. *l.*24. r, ones. *p.*54 *l.*12, for him, r. an Infant. *p.*62. *l.*10. r. covenant-relation. *p.*74. *l.*6. r. root. In the Sermon of Catechizing, In the Epistle, *p.*7. l. 21. r. hear, *p.*9. *l.*10. r. notions. In the Sermon it selfe, *p.*3. *l.*3. blot out the full point. *p.*7. *l.*7. r. נער *p.*8. *l.*20. read the Hebrew after old. *p.* 14. *l.*6. r. prov. 23. *l.*14. r. word for way, *p.*16. *l.*10. r. charily. *p.*18. read περισσότερος ζηλωτὴς παραδόσεων

An Epiſtle to the *Readers* of this Treatiſe, thoſe of my owne Flock, in *Reading*, in *Berk-ſhire*.

Chriſtian Reader:

I *Addreſſe my ſelfe to thee in the threſhold of this Treatiſe, with a* twofold requeſt, *before thou ſpend thy cenſure upon it. The* one *is, that thou* read, *and the* other *is, that thou* pray over *this little Treatiſe. Whatever thy judgment be, I hope it will not deny me herein, did it concerne thee leſſe, then (in my apprehenſion) this doth.*

The reaſon why I deſire the firſt *of thee, is becauſe I know many good books* ſuffer *under the unjuſt ſentence of prejudice, and diſaffection, before they are* read. *It being motive enough to moſt engaged perſons, on all hands, to condemne a booke; (that its* Title page *ſpeakes not of their ſide:) And the* ſecond, *I have this further reaſon to beg at thy hands; becauſe I know an* Unpraying Spirit *is very unfit to adventure upon the ſtudy of any* Practicall Subject *whatſoever. Practicall Truths alwayes carry ſome thing in them which goes againſt the graine of an heart not* taught of God, *and managed by his holy Spirit.*

If I can but obtaine theſe two *things of thee, I doubt not my ſucceſſe in this weake attempt towards thy ſatisfaction and ſettlement, in the practiſe and improvement of the Ordinance herein treated of.*

And next, (ſuppoſing that I have obtained my twofold requeſt) I ſhall only adde a twofold advertiſement *to thee concerning the following Treatiſe.*

Firſt. *That I compoſe it in a* Dialogue-way *for two reaſons,*

(1.) *That I might suite it to the capacities of such as are not able to make so profitable an use of books composed in a* Method of Art, *as of those that are framed in a* Method of Discourse.

(2.) *Because I see others who have gone before me in practicall discourses, have laboured in this way with abundant successe upon the ordinary sort of readers.*

Secondly, *that (the subject in the maine intent thereof being practicall) I have not beene so precisely carefull of expressions, as in a close* Controversie, *I would have beene. And therefore if thou be one that (in point of censoriousnesse)* wilt play at a small game rather then sit out, *I have my plea ready. I intended to direct the* Conscientious, *not to please the* Criticall *Reader. I am sure those that are of the true* Eagle-breed *of Christians, that* flie highest *in communion with God, and the increase of practicall godlinesse will not* stoope to catch flyes.

The Lord blesse this poor labour of mine unto thee for good, that thou maist hence know what use *to make of an* Ordinance, *which partly through Ignorance, and partly through* want of consideration, *most Christians doe too much profane; and thereby have, and doe still provoke the Lord to suffer it to be* called in Question, *and in divers places,* laid aside *altogether. It being just with God to continue Ordinances no longer among a people, then they use them as Ordinances.*

And (lastly) if thou receive any confirmation, satisfaction, excitation, or any other kinds of holy improvement hereby, let me intreate thee to put up one prayer, for the improveing and sanctifying of the poor abilities of him, who is

From my Study in *Reading*, *November* 4. 1654.

One of the meanest Servants of Christ, in the work of the Gospel,

SIMON FORD.